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ABSTRACT

A discussion is provided of key elements in the success of cooperative programs between high schools and colleges. First, traditional approaches to collaboration, such as the the development of high school courses by university teachers, are reviewed; differences in the cultures of the high school and the college are specified; and the broad range of options available to educators who are willing to accept the need for structural reform and to use the needs of the student as a guide is introduced. Next, the paper looks at factors that are important to successful collaboration, including: (1) the identification of a faculty member with a sense of mission and established credibility to design a realistic program which can gain the approval of authorities at each level of the system; and (2) the development of a program which offers benefits to both institutions. Then, the paper discusses the need for structural changes to ensure effective collaboration, focusing on mastery learning, lowered student/faculty ratios, limited school size, design of courses for the average as well as the exceptional student, and the inclusion of remedial programs within the curriculum. The final sections specify methods of enhancing the high school/college relationship, and the optimum methods of program evaluation. (HB)

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INSIGHTS FROM STUDIES ON COLLABORATION

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"INSIGHTS FROM STUDIES ON COLLABORATION"

As a result of the recent critical studies on both secondary and post secondary institutions, there is a revival of interest in the educational community on the relationship of colleges to high schools. Supported by the focus in the literature (Boyer, Maeroff, Sizer) and by economic self interest, higher education institutions are examining their responsibility for improving the quality of public education. When initiated by the colleges, the review usually summates in recommendations for improving high schools, a "trickle down" program. Not much of this is new; reform of high schools through colleges' recommendations has been the predominent pattern since Eliot's day and his Committee of Ten in 1892.

When we acknowledge the 100 year experience, there are many insights which surface to fuide contemporary innovators. As the trend for these partnerships proliferate, educators today are beginning to look at both what works and why it works, or the negative side: what fails and why it fails At the same time, any analysis must consider the context of the reform and then focus on the effort.

Historically, "trickle down," or programs initiated by higher education, worked for a long time. Directed to high achieving students and aimed at reducing the redundancy in curriculum, advanced placement programs (early admission, Project Advance, enrichment programs) served to reduce the problem of the wasted last year of high school, called "senioritis," from the 1950's to the 1970's.

During this period, other "trickle down" programs, where colleges and universities trained high school teachers, did serve to revitalize secondary school faculty, and renew faculty competency. In spite of that temporary happy outcome, the millions of dollars spent by the United States Department of Education from N.D.E.A. institutes of the 1940's to N.E.H. institutes of the 1980's, produced no hard evidence that training teachers results in improved student achievement.

Initially the design intended to enable teachers to relate to the practical educational scene. The goal was to contribute to the teacher not necessarily the student. Later on, the assumption that more satisfied teachers elicit increased student learning was added but without solid verification. There are just too many intervening variables in the life of a 1985 student to warrant a simple, unilateral cause and effect relationship. The conclusion must be that training teachers will not, by itself, appreciably improve the educational achievement levels. Something else must be added.

On the other hand, there are certain human developmental constants which may result in better programs when the focus begins with the students' needs. Human development has a natural continuity; there is no arbitrary gap between a 17 and an 18 year old. Yet, our system creastes a broad chasm for the student between the cultures of the high school and the college. In one setting, the high school, we see compulsion, dependence and control. In the other, the college, the student has autonomy, independence and freedom. The same student, four months later, encounters different credit systems, a financial aid structure, new grading patterns, and different expectations. Sizer suggests and Boyer agrees that if we change one major element driving the system of Carnegie units, the whole educational package can become more consistent. Recognizing the major problems of teenagers as alienation and ambiguity, educators can move the focus from "trickle down" and teacher education to real considerations of structural reform consistent with the psychosocial needs of today's student.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges has as a major focus the "Neglected Majority," the middle 50% of high school students currently overlooked by most collaborative approaches. Anything less than structural change constitutes an inadequate approach for the eleven million students who will not complete high school. Breakfast for drop-outs, summer remedial programs, mentors will not produce any appreciable improvement in the high school

drop out rate, which is 27% nationally and about 50% in large urban settings. As long as the sophisticated adolescent of the 1980's can drive, live with a lover, shoot or be shot, travel to Europe alone, and parent a child, the current structure of the secondary school will not hold a whole group of adolescents. A major change in the high school ecology is necessary to keep the urban student attending. When we accept the need for structural reform and use the developmental needs of the student as a guide, educators have a broad range of options. Recent history of collaboratives shows us that institutions based on these premises have prospered (Simon's Rock, LaGuardia Middle College, Matteo Ricci), because the students are well served.

What do these options entail? And what can we learn from both the successes and the failures? The National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) has studied the roles of the Chief Executive Officers in colleges and secondary schools in creating partnerships that work. Successful examples suggest that while consent at the top is necessary; it is not sufficient. There must be a sense of mission involved and leadership from a strong risk taker. Ideas for alternative programs generally come from a staff member, a creative thinker not bound by the administrative rigidities, and one who is a risk taker, willing to challenge the assumptions with ideas of substantive change. In many cases, the process is "trickle up" where an individual faculty member suggests a program to a president or a principal and the Chief Executive Officer approves. Follow through requires freedom and funding, a year of planning, and time to develop trust in the community. Failures result when higher education institutions, with the consent of top officials of the secondary system impose a program on a particular secondary school. In this connection, the attitude of the principal is critical. Whether conscious or not, the high school personnel ultimately defeat the college trickle down effort by benign neglect, overcrowded scheduling, or just inertia.

Therefore, the first criteria necessary for success is identifying some faculty member with a sense of mission and established credibility and enabling that individual to design a realistic program, which can gain the approval of the authorities in each level of the system. The second necessity is allowing time and money to develop the plan and guarantee its acceptance at the high school and college level. To do this, the program must have advantages for everyone. Partnerships must entail shared costs and shared benefits. Why should the college president enter into a partnership? What are the incentives? In today's context, the college responds to promises of cost effectiveness, increased enrollment, inexpensive recruitment, and a very positive community image. Programs of open admission and the need for remediation emphasize the transitional period of student development and highlights the gap for higher education officials. There are obvious benefits for high school superintendents. In many inner cities, high schools are closing because of declining enrollment and a high drop out rate; collaboratives pool resources. In some states, the governing bodies are creating the incentives by special funding allowances and by more rigid standards, which necessitate cooperation between the educational levels. In all cases, the top administrators must have adequate vision to override the excessive bureaucratic obstacles inherent in the artificial separations. Administrators at both levels have to understand that the risks are not that great, and the advantages of more students being better prepared serves everyone. The Chief Executive Officers have to determine a method for sharing costs, for awarding credits, for faculty exchanges, for scheduling consistency, and for integrating administrations. Examined closely, most of these problems focus on territoriality: whose campus? whose budget? whose credits?

Once the territorial issues are solved, innovators can attack the real root of the separation: Carnegie units, the concept that learning equals time spent in the seat. Conversely, when mastery of a content area becomes the measure for progress, then the current rigidity and age determined placement dissolves.

Students move as quickly or as slowly as their competence indicates, and incentives for learning are built in to the program. Graduation becomes the motivating force. All the developmental needs for autonomy, self determination, and controlling one's own destiny begin operating when the burden of learning is on the student instead of on the institution and its staff.

Collaboratives that work probide those developmental opportunities for students; that is why the high school-college coalition succeeds. Also, once the concept of units is overcome, education can move to be "the seamless web" that Boyer recommends. Breaks in the system can be redesigned; we can eliminate the junior high years (7, 8, 9th grades) and go back to grades 1 through 8 and 9 to 12 if we think it useful, or include the 10th through 14th grades in high school, or pre-professional and professional schools to the colleges. The arrangement of the sequence is not limited to the current plans, once we look at competence instead of the calendar.

Understanding the diversity of student achievement and the range of students' ability suggest using mastery as the key to educational progress. Otherwise we merely give lip service to individual differences and as Sizer says, "the hierarchical bureaucratic structure gets in the way of learning". We need to make winners of ordinary students.

Collaborative settings which are based on mastery and provide alternatives to the standardization of education can only succeed if we make other changes in organization. To treat students as individuals, the school needs a lower student to faculty ratio. Successful collaboratives often substitute small college class sizes for large high school classes and with that comes closer student-faculty relationships and later more self esteem. The need for "making it" with peers and strangers is more easily fulfilled by the presence of college students, who simultaneously provide models and raise aspirational standards of minority students. Once the structure is altered, the size of the new institution must be limited to 500 students. To fulfill the educational goals of developing the individual,

schools must connect with the student. Large institutions beget impersonal routines, and students experience systems, not people. Today's adolescent needs a heavy component of counseling and mentoring to meet society's demands; small settings foster those opportunities.

When the structure does not change; where the high school environmental parameters emphasize attendance, compliance and dependency, the average student either settles for the reward of a diploma or scrambles into adulthood on his own (Sizer). The consequent boredom of rebellion creates reactions which punish or push out the lagging student.

There's no trick in attracting and holding the above average student and up to now, most programs bearing the rubric of collaborative have been designed for the academically able. Magnet schools, programs for gifted and talented and early admissions are not reforms; merely adjustments. They offer no help for the"late bloomer" or any substantive change to ease the transition.

Attempts at remedial programs or collaboratives for the average urban high school student are significantly harder to initiate and consequently fewer in number. Yet these are the major groups which need incentives to continue their schooling. Conversely, programs for vocationally oriented students appear to be the most cohesive and effective. The point to be made is where there is an agreed upon sequence of learning, as in technical education, and an emphasis on continuity in learning, in acquiring skills, educators can smooth the transition and the program becomes more coherent.

Given that the structure needs redesign, the process of collaboration enters into a discussion phase which evolves into a program. It is appropriate for either high school or college to begin with a few basic ideas, which stem

from the strength of the institution, and to build the project jointly. Each collaborative will and should be different, tailored to the needs of the institution and the population it serves. In that context, a working relationship will evolve. The type of collaboration available covers a broad range, but there are some additional caveats for innovators. The first is to avoid the fallacy of one-to-one causality. Success in educational reform is a highly complicated process, with a number of intervening variables and one alteration of a system will not have immediate, discernible results. Two, the flexibility of the institutions involved can be a significant issue in the ease of collaboration. Compromise is the name of the game. Thirdly, each institution, in seeking cooperation, has to find ways to reward the participants; these rewards have to be imbedded in the particular culture of the faculty member: released time for college faculty, additional pay for high school teachers. In this context, it is important to remember that most individual high schools have no allocation for planning or for faculty development and no concept of adjuncts. Colleges often have to put the money for the planning up front.

Finally, we come to the question of evaluation. The question is not only: "How can we tell that a program works?" but also "Whose point of view are we considering: students, faculty, institution?" Again, each school must determine its own agenda, but the evaluation questions can drive the program and need to be tackled early in the planning. Studies show that the institutional setting, the power of the site, relates to the success of the programs.

Contemporary educational conditions create a context which can only be met by structural reform. When such changes as a resolution of the turf and the time question are reconsidered, the schools can address the students' needs.

Consumerism in education and the importance of marketing reinforce that direction. As a response to the current educational criticisms, collaboratives offer a promise for shared resources and curricula continuity. Educators do not need to either reinvent the wheel or repeat the mistakes of the past; we need to move with the times and indeed, "The times they are a changing" (Dylan).

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